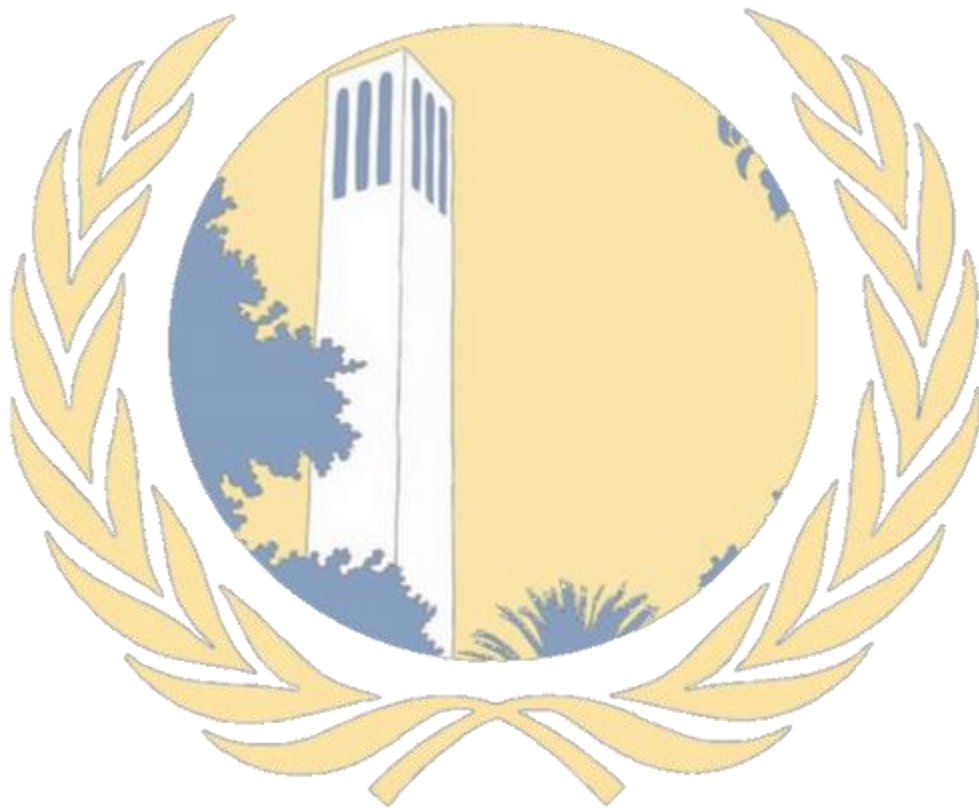


Tenth Annual Session *of the*
Gaicho Model United Nations Conference
February 15–17, 2019



United Nations Environment Programme

Topic 1 – Preparational Measures for the Eventual Climate Refugee Crisis

Background

For over 200 years, scientists around the world have continuously studied climate change and its already devastating effects on the human population. Their main conclusion? The global effect of climate change is not a problem for the distant future. It is very much a present danger and one with a human face.

Each year, approximately 24 million people end up displaced due to catastrophic climate disasters such as drought and flooding out of some 65.6 million total refugees worldwide. As climate change worsens year after year, many scientists predict that these numbers will only grow larger. By 2050, an estimated 143 million people will be displaced if this status quo is maintained. The World Bank Group has a very detailed and splendid report [here](#) if you are interested in an exact analysis of the current situation.

But wait, there's more! New data also suggests that within 20-30 years, rising sea levels caused by climate change could see the complete disappearance of 42 island states including the 10 square mile nation of Tuvalu. The prospect of states completely disappearing or being so severely damaging to humanity is nothing to sneeze at and further proves that this is a very real prospect regardless of whether one believes that climate change comes from humankind or nature.



Another big concern that arises from the global climate refugee crisis are the violent aspects associated with the pandemic. For instance, civil wars in developing states (of whom suffer the most from climate change) will no longer be between conflicting identities or ideologies, but instead will be over the scarcity of natural resources. Subsequently, we already see the significant presence of non-state criminal enterprises in these areas that prey upon the desperate by capitalizing on what little remains of accessible resources. Furthermore, how these refugees escape the danger that climate change possesses depends largely on neighboring states. To explain, the idea of the nation-state and clear, territorial borders as we know it today is only a few centuries old relative to the existence of humanity. Instead of being able to freely migrate away from the dangers of nature, climate refugees are usually confined to that of their own country's borders seeing as most modern states today do not openly accept refugees of their status or size. Also, it is important to note that many of these neighboring states already suffer from their own domestic problems and would probably not take kindly to a refugee crisis on their borders. These crises often end violently and pose an even greater humanitarian challenge to the international community.

"Addressing the changes in the Earth's climate is not simply about saving polar bears and preserving the beauty of mountain glaciers. Climate change is a threat to our national security."

Navy Vice Admiral Lee F. Gunn

In a more Malthusian perspective, many scientists predict that without a clear plan for the inevitable mass climate migration, we will start to see "climate wars" break out all over the globe as people begin competing for resources. The impact of climate change will

cause great instability within states and force millions into a migration domino effect ending with the developed nations dealing with hundreds of millions of refugees at their door. In the United States, for example, the concern over a few million southern migrants will become trivial compared to what will happen if the status quo of climate change is maintained. Overall this prospect is, most assuredly, a danger to peace everywhere.

Mobilization on an enormous, wartime level is what it will take to resolve this global issue. We encourage all those delegates attending UNEP to put your best foot forward in crafting creative solutions applicable all over the world, for it will take the political will of all nations to resolve this danger. In the famous words of Winston Churchill that still ring true today, "The era of procrastination, of half-measures, of soothing and baffling expedients, of delays is coming to its close. In its place we are entering a period of consequences."

Past UN Involvement

First and foremost, concern over the legal status of climate refugees remains largely undefined by international standards. Debate over whether those forced to migrate due to environmental causes should be granted asylum status centers around this lack of a definition. Some political scholars argue that the definition should be expanded to include climate refugees while others argue that it should be limited to the current mandate limited to refugees of political actions in their home country beyond their control.

In May of 2018, the United Nations proposed their latest draft of the Global Compact for Migration which calls for states to "better map, understand, predict and address migration movements, including those resulting from sudden- and slow-onset natural disasters, environmental degradation, the adverse effects of climate change" and

"cooperate to identify, develop and strengthen solutions, including planned relocation and visa options" for climate migrants. However, many migration experts such as Dr. Nina Hall argue that compacts like this will never be the transformative actions that the world needs right now regarding refugees.

For island states such as the aforementioned Tuvalu, no international law provides precedent for how their population would go about inhabiting a new territory elsewhere. For instance, the president of the island state of Maldives in the Indian Ocean has already publicly expressed interest in establishing new real estate for the population as rising sea levels get worse in the country. Moreover, the rise of nationalism in the United States and European bloc has hindered most efforts within the United Nations to begin drafting a solution to all these issues.

Case Studies

Bangladesh

The People's Republic of Bangladesh has been described as the "ground zero for climate change" given the large impact it has had on the lives of much of the population. Scientists have noticed that a single meter rise in sea level could devastate 40% of the rice crops spanning the coastline. Hundreds of thousands of people living in Bangladesh are consistently forced from their homes due to climate change and must make the perilous journey to the capital of Dhaka, where they are compelled to live in the slums on the outside of the city.

Furthermore, these refugees are, like other refugees around the world, confined to their own borders for more reasons than one – including the fact that their neighboring

state, India, is a majority Hindu population that would likely be apprehensive to a sudden influx of Muslim migrants in their country.

China

While not currently in the middle of a climate refugee crisis such as South East Asia or Saharan Africa, much of the Chinese population is at risk for the future consequences of climate change. For instance, many of the major rivers in Asia (Ganges, Yellow, etc.) originate from Tibetan glaciers that have been receding drastically as a result of climate change. Many scientists studying this trend have attributed much of the global warming caused by greenhouse gases to the rising economy and energy usage of China.

Roughly half of the world's population depend on the water supply from these glaciers and an increase in global warming could dramatically escalate the climate refugee crisis. China is not by any means the sole catalyst of this problem, but delegates should take care to understand their state's policy thoroughly as they attempt to craft a successful policy prescription.

Questions to Consider

- Can the United Nations provide redefine "refugee" as it is defined by international law to include those affected by the environment? What are the benefits and consequences of this?
- How can the UN effectively encourage the invention of new technology to help alleviate the problems associated with climate change?
- What should be the responsibilities of developed nations in all of this?
- Does the Geneva Convention apply to climate refugees?

Topic 2 - Conservation of the Natural Environment in Urban Areas

Background

Conservation is the prevention of the loss of Earth's biodiversity, which is the variety of life in either a specific area or Earth as a whole. Therefore, the ultimate goal of conservation is to protect the various kinds of life at every biological level. As the loss of biodiversity has lately been caused by actions of humans, conservation must now include interaction by humans especially as new conservation techniques have come to involve law, economics, and social sciences (Pimm).

Additionally, urbanization is the increasing number of people living in urban areas leading to the physical growth of an urban area. Currently, the world is undergoing its largest wave of urban population growth ever seen ("Urbanization"). This is leading to an array of social, economic, and environmental issues and changes that are going to transform the planet. As urbanization continues at such a rapid pace the environmental issues are changing from small local problems to focusing on global issues like sustainability. However, progress made on any level of issue, whether local or regional, will help to solve global environmental problems that the planet is facing. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is working to undertake certain measures and examine what environmental improvements can be made to conserve the natural environment in urban areas ("Urbanisation and the Environment").

As urbanization only continues to occur, causing cities to grow larger and larger, the environment is seeing the greatest impact. Conservation within an urban area is a way to protect biodiversity within the city or improve the current state of that area. Cities and the increasing number of people living in these cities depend on the environment and a flow of resources from the local ecosystem in order for the city to thrive. As biodiversity is lost and the environment is

being damaged and destroyed by the actions of humans, these resources are lost which is why conservation of natural resources has become an important focus. Also, cities rely on nature in order to survive, but the cities also affect the survival of nature based on the pollutants, thus encouraging the conservation of nature (McDonald).

Past UN Involvement

As climate change continues to present itself as a greater issue and threat to the planet, the United Nations has increased its focus on environmental issues and solutions throughout the years. Recently, the focus and attention to policy dealing with the environment has been greatly increased.

The UNEP produced their first “Global Biodiversity Assessment” report in November of 1995. This was produced at the Convention on Biological Diversity and was the most comprehensive report on the analysis of biodiversity to date. The report documents the threat to Earth’s natural resources, but displayed that very little progress had been made in producing policy to conserve these resources. The analysis detailed in the report illustrated that the natural resources on the planet are used inefficiently and that the loss of biodiversity can be attributed to human action and the way that societies use these resources. This report led to the belief that policy could be adopted to reward those who invest in conservation and encourage people to review the consequences of their actions and the social impact of the consumption and lack of conservation of resources. The focus of this document was on the cultural impact and values on biodiversity as well as the human impact on biodiversity, thus leading the way and encouraging the future policy on the conservation and protection of natural resources (“UNEP Releases First Global Biodiversity Assessment Report”).

In 2000, the United Nations opened an institute in Great Britain for the World Conservation Monitoring Centre (WCMC) which joined the UNEP as its global biodiversity information and assessment centre. The purpose of the WCMC was to assess the health and status of ecosystems and the threats they face. Another goal of the WCMC was to help individual nations develop their own systems for biodiversity information so that policy can be developed that is based on science and will create regulations for the environment with the goal of conservation of the natural resources in mind (“New UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre Opens Today in Cambridge, United Kingdom”). The WCMC was a way to create a system to better create scientifically-based environmental policy. This centre acted as some of the first steps in developing a way to make policy with facts as the basis that would be able to work towards conservation of resources.

In 2010, the UN has drafted the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 which was a framework for action on preserving biodiversity by all included nations. The goal of this plan was to take immediate action to conserve resources as well as ensure that these resources are being used wisely and greatly reduce the amount of biodiversity that is being lost each year (“Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets”). In 2014, the UN released The Global Biodiversity Outlook 4 which was published after 200 nations met in South Korea at the twelfth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (Webb). They came to realize that their conservation efforts were lacking as they failed to meet many of the goals they had set. This meeting was set at the near halfway point for the plan which is made up of fifty-six elements for which only five were on track for the 2020 goal. Fifteen of the goals set showed either no progress at all or they had only gotten worse (Vaughan). Therefore, the efforts for conservation were failing which led to the publication of The Global

Biodiversity Outlook 4 which notes the progress that has been made while also emphasizing the need for additional efforts to be applied to conservation (Webbe). As 2020 approaches it has become an important realization that nations are going to need to work together in producing policy and outcomes that will make forward progress in conservation of the environment.

The United Nations drafted a plan in 2015 that adopted seventeen goals as part of the agenda to promote sustainable development. UNEP called these the 17 UN Sustainable Goals and were part of The 2030 Agenda. The purpose of these goals is to ultimately promote environmental sustainability across the planet. The 2030 Agenda was developed in order to take social, economic, and environmental parts of society into consideration when creating a more sustainable planet. With this agenda, countries created their own individual pathways to reach their goals as a nation allowing for their own governance and policy for action (“Why do the Sustainable Development Goals matter?”). One of these specific goals is goal eleven which involves creating sustainable cities and communities. The main point behind this is to create cities that are resource efficient and therefore have a reduced impact on the environment. Some of the main targets include resource efficiency by cities as well as access to green public places (“Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities”). Therefore, conservation of the natural resources within cities has been moved to the front of environmental targets and goals as time moves forward. Additionally, Resolution 70/1 was passed by the General Assembly of the UN in order to formally state the individual tasks and goals of The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ultimately, this resolution draws out the complete plan for the goals that were passed by the UN (General Assembly Resolution 70/1).

UNEP passed several resolutions in 2016 related to conservation of the natural environment as well. Resolution 2/3 focused on the education of people on the environment in

order to promote sustainability on the planet. The main parts of this resolution requested further resources for training and education on the environment and sustainability (UNEP Resolution 2/3). By promoting education in this area, it will lead to more research and solutions for creating a more sustainable city and world and thus encouraging the conservation of resources. In addition, Resolution 2/8 focused on sustainable consumption and production highlighting the implementation of the ten year framework of goals to produce a more sustainable world. The resolution encourages all Member States, with developed nations taking the lead, to meet the goals of the ten year framework and create more sustainable cities. The resolution calls for the integration into all aspects and levels of life (UNEP Resolution 2/8). The more sustainable that cities and nations are, the more aware the people will become about the state of the environment. Through these sustainable practices, the conservation of resources will begin to take place, thus creating a more secure planet.

More recently, in 2018, the United Nations came up with their Good Life Goals in order to promote sustainability. The Good Life Goals are an addition to The Sustainable Development Goals that were created as part of the 2030 Agenda, however, the Good Life Goals are part of a global movement promoting a sustainable lifestyle among individuals. These goals link the common people to the Sustainable Development goals allowing for people to see their impact on the planet. There are seventeen Good Life Goals, each linked to a Sustainable Development Goal and each one is made up of five individual actions that people can take part in to promote sustainability (“Good Life Goals The Manual.”). Ultimately, this emphasis on sustainability will lead to conservation of resources as people begin to take individual action to better the planet and the environment.

Also, the fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity convened in November in order to discuss mainstreaming biodiversity as well as discussing ideas on the global biodiversity framework that is to be adopted in 2020. The talks included discussion on integrating biodiversity into policy and legislation as well as promoting sustainability (Wagner). In addition, UNEP also published The Protected Planet Report in November which ultimately stated that the world is on track to make their conservation goals with the 15% terrestrial and 7% marine newly protected areas. Since failing to meet goals in the past for conservation and sustainability, great progress has been made recently to meet some of the initial goals laid out for 2020 (“With 15% of terrestrial and 7% of marine areas now protected, world on track to meet conservation targets”).

Case Studies

India

India is a large country that is home to an even greater population. In the coming years, the population of Indian cities are expected to only continue to grow and as this urbanization occurs, while it does bring economic growth, it is also threatening the environment and local resources. Some of the major issues that India is beginning to face is a sustained energy supply as well as a sustained water supply, two key parts of daily life in the world today (“Urbanization in India.”).

In India, sixty-seven cities are water-stressed. The process of watershed conservation would be able to help around 700 million people. As lower income cities have less-developed water infrastructure they usually are the most water-stressed while also being home to the greatest populations. Cities are struggling to manage both the quality and the quantity of available water. The solutions to this issue include the expensive route of creating a larger water

supply by digging deeper for groundwater or the more cost-effective route of simply using water in a more efficient manner (Sengupta). Therefore, by conserving water at its source it will allow for a greater amount of water as well as be cost-effective.

The Nature Conservancy is an organization working in India in order to support the efforts of India in developing sustainability. Currently, India supports eight percent of the Earth's biodiversity and eighteen percent of the world's human population ("The Nature Conservancy in India"). The Nature Conservancy is working to create scientifically based solutions to conserve the rivers in India as their levels continue to decrease. These rivers, like the River Narmada, are both crucial as a water supply that supports the people as well as a very sacred river and element to the people in India. Restoring this river has become a national priority and scientists have determined that by reforesting the riverbanks it would increase the natural habitat for the river ("Hope for the River Narmada"). The conservation of this river will not only be pleasing to the people for the sacred nature of the river, but it also will contribute to creating an additional carbon sink as well as a better water supply for the people.

Additionally, The Nature Conservancy has also worked in India to build drought resistance, especially in the area of Maharashtra. As almost 70% of India is considered to be dry land, water is a natural resource that needs to be a main focus of conservation efforts. By creating a drought resistance framework, The Nature Conservancy hopes to display how water conservation will reduce costs thus encouraging the implementation of policy and action as it will then be beneficial to the government, people, and the environment (Nandrajog). These efforts to conserve the environment are proving as beneficial to the economy and government encouraging policy to form and be implemented and thus the more solutions that can be created, the better off the planet will be.

Ethiopia

The capital of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa, has seen one of the world's fastest rates of urbanization. This period of rapid growth has led to an immense amount of new construction and ultimately change for the city (Young). This rapid growth has caused a number of issues within the capital city including problems related to the management of the environment. These problems come from a lack of available water to the people as well as sanitation and waste management problems. Also, the rainy season brings about flooding due to the lack of green areas to absorb the water (Young). As more environmental problems begin to stack up, solutions are being drafted.

The Ethiopian Wildlife and Natural History society celebrated fifty years in 2017. This organization has been promoting conservation throughout Ethiopia for years and has managed to make some effective contributions. The society has worked on nature conservation, public awareness campaigns, celebrations of World Environment Day, conservation of threatened and endemic species, and rehabilitation of certain degraded lands (Torto). These achievements have contributed greatly to the encouragement of conservation in the nation of Ethiopia. This society works not only to actually take part in conservation projects, but also increase awareness in the eyes of the people, making environmental issues appear as more well-known and display these problems as a real threat to the livelihood of people in Ethiopia.

The degradation of ecosystems and loss of biodiversity in Ethiopia has led to an array of problems including loss of water resources, insecurity of food, and the loss of biodiversity. These environmental issues have been incorporated through work by US Aid in order to bring about sustainable development in Ethiopia. Intervention also included steps taken by the US Forest Service in order to provide assistance on landscape planning and management. Also, US Aid

worked to increase climate resilient growth in the lowlands of Ethiopia by creating diversity among species (“Environment”). These interactions have led to creating a more sustainable and environmentally aware Ethiopia.

Ethiopia has faced many environmental issues where solutions have been needed and slowly created and implemented. Many of the environmental issues facing Ethiopia revolve around deforestation, desertification due to soil erosion, and drought. Much of the natural vegetation of Ethiopia no longer exists today, except for in some of the southern areas. To combat the issue of deforestation and promote conservation of what little is left the International Development Partnerships have provided the reforestation of the indigenous tree populations of Ethiopia as well as encouraging the planting of trees near homes in rural areas. This will lead to an increase in the carbon sink of Ethiopia encouraging a more sustainable environment overall. In response to the soil erosion, worm breeding has taken place to enrich the soil as well as small scale irrigation. To combat drought, the incorporation of drought resistant grasses has begun which is also acting as a way to reclaim degraded land that is a product of desertification (“Environment Project”). Ultimately, this action will lead to a more sustainable nation that will be able to support its growing city populations, especially that in Addis Ababa. As conservation of these resources and rehabilitation of these resources takes place the people will be better off as will the environment and the planet.

Questions to Consider

- How should UNEP address the rapid urbanization in cities and its effect on the environment?
- What steps can be taken to facilitate the development of sustainability and conservation projects among developing nations?

- How can nations/cities adapt to sustainable practices without damaging local industries?
- How can urban planners integrate sustainable initiatives and policies into their building plans?
- What are the most urgent dangers your country faces from climate change and what steps can be taken to protect against those dangers (e.g. wildfires, sea-level rise. Drought, etc)?
- How can countries protect wildlife, specifically native flora and fauna, in urban spaces?

Works Cited

“Environment.” *USAID*, n.d., www.usaid.gov/ethiopia/environment.

“Environment Project.” *International Development Partnerships*, n.d, www.idp-uk.org/OurProjects/Environment/EnvironmentProject.htm.

General Assembly Resolution 70/1, Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, A/RES/70/1 (21 October 2015), available from www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/migration/generalassembly/docs/globalcompact/A_RES_70_1_E.pdf.

“Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities.” *United Nations Environment Programme*, 2018, www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter/goal-11.

“Good Life Goals The Manual.” *United Nations Environment Programme*, 2018, wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/26433/GLG_Manual.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

“Hope for the River Narmada.” *The Nature Conservancy*, n.d., www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/india/stories-in-india/hope-for-the-river-narmada/.

- McDonald, Rob. "The Big Idea: Conservation in an Urban World." *Conservation Gateway*, 22 Feb. 2012, www.conservationgateway.org/News/Pages/big-idea-conservation-urb.aspx.
- Nandrajog, Sonali. "Building Drought Resilience in Water Stressed Maharashtra." *The Nature Conservancy*, 27 June. 2018, www.tncindia.in/building-drought-resilience-in-water-stressed-maharashtra/.
- "New UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre Opens Today in Cambridge, United Kingdom." *United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, 3 July 2000, www.un.org/press/en/2000/20000703.unep71.doc.html.
- Pimm, Stuart. "Conservation." *Britannica*, 20 July. 1998. www.britannica.com/science/conservation-ecology.
- Sengupta, Sushmita. "Watershed conservation can benefit 700 million people in 100 cities." *DownToEarth*, 17 Aug. 2015, www.downtoearth.org.in/interviews/science-and-technology/watershed-conservation-can-benefit-700-million-people-in-100-big-cities--47711.
- "Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the Aichi Targets." *United Nations Environment Programme*, 2010, www.cbd.int/doc/strategic-plan/2011-2020/Aichi-Targets-EN.pdf.
- "The Nature Conservancy in India." *The Nature Conservancy*, www.nature.org/en-us/about-us/where-we-work/india/. Accessed 20 Dec. 2018.
- Torto, Obaka. "EWNHS celebrates 50 years of conservation success in Ethiopia." *Bird Life International*, 8 Sep. 2017, www.birdlife.org/africa/news/ewnhs-celebrates-50-years-conservation-success-ethiopia.
- "UNEP Releases First Global Biodiversity Assessment Report." *United Nations Meetings Coverage and Press Releases*, 14 Nov. 1995, www.un.org/press/en/1995/19951114.he916.html.

UNEP Resolution 2/3, Investing in human capacity for sustainable development through environmental education and training, UNEP/EA2/Res3 (3 August 2016), available from wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11169/K1607131_UNEPEA2_RES3E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

UNEP Resolution 2/8, Sustainable consumption and production, UNEP/EA2/Res8 (3 August 2016)
Available from wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/11184/K1607179_UNEPEA2_RES8E.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

“Urbanisation and the Environment.” *International Institute for Environment and Development*, n.d., www.iied.org/urbanisation-environment.

“Urbanization.” *United Nations Population Fund*, n.d., www.unfpa.org/urbanization.

“Urbanization in India.” *The World Bank*, 22 Sept. 2011, www.worldbank.org/en/news/feature/2011/09/22/india-urbanization.

Vaughan, Adam. “UN biodiversity report highlights failure to meet conservation targets.” *The Guardian*, 5 Oct. 2014, www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/oct/06/un-biodiversity-report-failure-meet-conservation-targets.

Wagner, Lynne. “UN Biodiversity Conference High-Level Segment Emphasizes Need for Integrated Action.” *IISD*, 20 Nov. 2018, dg.iisd.org/news/un-biodiversity-conference-high-level-segment-emphasizes-need-for-integrated-action/.

Webbe, Jaime. “CBD and UNEP Release Global Biodiversity Outlook 4.” *IISD*, 7 Oct. 2014, sdg.iisd.org/news/cbd-and-unep-release-global-biodiversity-outlook-4/.

“With 15% of terrestrial and 7% of marine areas now protected, world on track to meet conservation targets.” *United Nations Environment Programme*, 19 Nov. 2018,

[/www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/15-terrestrial-and-7-marine-areas-now-protected-world-track-meet](http://www.unenvironment.org/news-and-stories/press-release/15-terrestrial-and-7-marine-areas-now-protected-world-track-meet).

“Why do the Sustainable Development Goals matter?” *United Nations Environment*

Programme, www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/sustainable-development-goals/why-do-sustainable-development-goals-matter.

Young, Adrian. No pain, no gain? Rapid urban growth and urbanism in Addis Ababa.”

UrbanAfrica.Net, 9 April. 2014, www.urbanafrica.net/urban-voices/pain-gain-rapid-urban-growth-urbanism-addis-ababa/.